during the current year (during April-December, 1994) are coffee, floriculture products, sports goods, marine products, plastics & linoleum, other ores and minerals, cotton yarn fabrics, made ups and project goods etc. Export Promotion is a continuous process. Country—specific and commodity—specific measures are taken to boost export. Export performance is continuously reviewed to improve performance.

MOU between India and USA

869. SHRI SOM PAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether India has signed an MOU with the United States of America for setting up an Indo-US commercial alliance;

(b) if so, what are the salient features of the MOU and how India is going to benefit from the arrangement; and

(c) when is the alliance going to be operative?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Commercial Alliance provides a framework for increased interaction between private sector enterprises in both countries for expanding business relations. The Alliance will be headed by a Board made up of private sector representatives to be nominated by US Commerce Secretary and Indian Commerce Minister. The Board will have two co-chairman, one from each side. The Board will invite private sector representatives to join and organise Business Alliances, to discuss commercial co-operation in specific sectors and implement trade/business development programmes.

(c) The MOU on the Alliance was signed on 16-1-1995. In terms of the MOU, the Alliance is expected to become operative within 90 days of signing of the MOU.

Balanced Foreign Trade

870. SHRI K. R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether in the April-December, 1994 period country's exports went up by 16.88 per cent but the imports rose by 23.92 per cent as reported in the Times of India dated 11-2-95; and

(b) when and how Government propose to balance the two policies to give a more or less balanced foreign trade?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) A prior balancing of imports and exports is not feasible under a liberalised trade regime. Increase in imports reflect increase in volume and unit value of a number of essential production inputs required by the Indian economy. As regards exports, various measures have been undertaken to promote exports including grant of tax-exemption on Export-profits, acess to cheaper Export-credits and market-development support for Export Promotion Councils, etc.

Coffee cultivation in Andhra Pradesh

871. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to Unstarred Question 3527 given in the Rajya Sabha on 22nd August, 1994 and state:

(a) whether any efforts are being made to extend coffee cultivation in Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) if so, the programmes of the Coffee Board in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Till date 10,404 ha. have been brought under coffee cultivation in Andhra Pradesh. Under the 8th Plan, efforts are being made to expand coffee cultivation in non-traditional areas, in-

cluding Andhra Pradesh. As a part of this effort, the Board has established a Regional Research Station at R. V. Nagar, extension centres at Chintapalli (two) and Araku Vallley, Regional Office at Vishakapatnam and a coffee demonstration farm at Minumuluru.

Trade Gap

872. SHRI S. S. AHLUWALIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the trade-gap has been consistently widening;

(b) details of trade gap as on 31st January, 1995 and the corresponding figure for the same period last year;

(c) factors responsible for widening of trade gap, particularly since the recent past despite substantial improvement in the benefit package with a view to boosting India's export, during the period; and

(d) what measures have been taken/contemplated by Government to narrow the trade gap gradually?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) Trade deficit estimated at US $1837.41 million during April-January, 1994-95 though higher than US $581.68 millior during April—January, 1993-94 is lower than US $3596.39 million during corresponding period in 19992-93.

(c) Trade gap has widened in the current year due to increase in Non-POL imports consequent upon increased growth of industry, and import-linked exports considering that major part of imports is still constituted by raw materials, intermediates, inputs and capital goods.

(d) Trade deficit is within the manageable limit considering the present level of foreign exchange reserved.

Auction of tea gardens of TTCI

873. SHRI RATNA BAHADUR RAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that tenders were invited for auction of tea gardens under the T.T.C.I.; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) SBI Capital Markets Ltd., who have been engaged for finalising sale of the tea gardens vested in TTCI, have invited tenders asking for expression of interest/financial offer from parties who are interested in purchase of four gardens owned by TTCI viz. Paghok Tear Estate, Vah Tokvar Tea Estate, Looksan Tea Estate and Potong Tea Estate. Similar Tender for Pathini Tea Estate is in process of finalisation.

Targets for exports

874. DR. B. B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 1780 given in the Rajya Sabha on 19-12-94 and state:

(a) the target set for export during 1994-95;

(b) how this has been achieved; and

(c) details of steps taken to increase exports especially in the Rupee Payment Area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) No export target has been set for 1994-95. However, Trade and Industry hve been exhorted to achieve export growth of 25 per cent during the current year. The Eight Plan (1992-97) envisages an export target of 13.6 per cent annum in value terms (at 1991-92 prices) during the Plan period.